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ABSTRACT

Inappropriate grade placement of a migrant child frequently prevents the child from graduating. Statistics show that very few migrants graduate at age 20, and almost none have graduated at an age older than 20. Therefore, students who are placed two or more years below their grade level are virtually doomed to drop out of school. Project Upgrade assists districts to assign and reassign migrant children to the appropriate grade level. Briefly describing Project Upgrade, this paper, written in English and Spanish, outlines seven reasons why schools misplace migrants, six aids for promoting proper placement of migrant children when they first enter school, four rationales to the school for proper placement, six tools to have on hand, five suggested procedures for parent education regarding upgrading, ways to cure improper age-grade placement, and six possibilities for those who have abandoned all hope of graduating. The paper briefly discusses when to upgrade students, special needs at the junior high school level, brainstorming about upgrading at the high school level, evaluation procedures (need assessment), and evaluation of Project Upgrade's effectiveness (short-term and long-term evaluation). (NQA)

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PROJECT UPGRADE

Appropriate Age/Grade Placement for Migrant Children

presented for
The National Migrant Education Conference
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written and presented by:
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PROJECT UPGRADE

(A project to assist districts to assign and reassign migrant children to the appropriate grade level)

RATIONALE FOR THE PROJECT

Why Project Upgrade?

What are the effects of placing a migrant child in an inappropriate grade level? Frequently the child never graduates. Since in most schools systems moving children ahead practically never occurs, an inappropriately placed child is condemned to graduate behind grade level by at least as many years as the child is misplaced. Or that child may not graduate at all. Compounding inappropriate grade placement retard or prevent graduation is the fact that continued migrancy may cause a child to loose more years of schooling, or at the high school level, to loose credits. The second most common factor for delay of graduation is the need on the part of the family for a child to either work or baby-sit so that parents can work during harvest times. This frequently results in further loss of credits and additional years to graduation.

Description of the Problem:

Statistics show that very few migrant children graduate at age of 20, and almost none have graduated at older than 20. Therefore, any child who is placed two or more years below his grade level is virtually doomed to drop out of school. Even one year, with the added possibility of losing another year because of migrancy or credit loss in the upper grades dooms a child to dropping out. (Support data attached)

WHY DO SCHOOLS MISPLACE MIGRANTS?

1. They look young (are small).
2. They don't speak English so they don't protest.
3. The schools think they will learn English faster in lower grade levels.
4. The students have never or rarely attended school.
5. The students or parents inform school of last grade attended (which may not be equivalent, or may reflect a year of traveling, or sporadic schooling).
6. Schools group migrants with other migrants or NEP/LEP children.
7. Someone believes that if the children attend kindergarten they will only have to attend half a day, and that will be less traumatic. (for whom?).

TARGETING THE CHANGE AGENTS

Things Migrant Staff should know about upgrading migrant students:

1. Misplacement of migrant children is often irrevocable and should be avoided at all costs.

2. Once a child is in high school, upgrading is almost impossible because of the credit system.
3. Once a child is established at one grade level it is difficult to upgrade him because schools do not want to set a precedent for other children.
4. There are essentially no legal guidelines concerning placement of students; some school districts may have guidelines, but this is rare.
5. Office staff are often the primary decision-makers concerning placement of migrant children.
6. Migrant aides are often secondary decision-makers concerning placement of migrant children.
7. Parents may unwittingly advocate for improper placement of their children for a variety of reasons.

AIDS FOR PROMOTING PROPER PLACEMENT OF MIGRANT CHILDREN WHEN THEY FIRST ENTER SCHOOL

- Educate the parent prior to entering the school concerning the advantages of proper age-grade placement.
- If parents do not have birth certificates, inform them that they can sign an affidavit stating the birth date of the child (They do not need immigration papers and the school cannot legally ask for them).
- Educate aides to the importance of proper age-grade placement (staff meetings, newsletters, individual indoctrination).
- Scout school to see who does make placement decisions and educate that person, or talk to principal and ask that a particular person be assigned to make placement decisions (bilingual teacher?) and educate that person.
- Educate the principal and superintendent to the importance of correct placement.
- Identify, offer to train, and offer to administer a quick assessment test (in child's strongest language) to determine grade level. (This may work to your disadvantage if the children tend to be academically below grade level; you may want to use it as a last alternative)

RATIONALES TO THE SCHOOL FOR PROPER PLACEMENT

1. Remind the school of the broad range of academic performance within each grade level. Use CTBS scores for entire grade to demonstrate that the new migrant students will be able to work within the range of performance of their age group
2. Peer tutoring has as many benefits for the tutor as for the students. Exolain that students in a classroom can gain a feeling of confidence by teaching English to a NES/LES student, or tutoring a migrant child in some other area.
3. Cross age tutoring is an option for the migrant child as tutor or student. Migrant students have successfully tutored in lower grades, especially kindergarten,

and benefitted themselves (more oral language) and their students. This is a way to get an older child to visit a lower level classroom, which may be high in language development, without adding years to his school career.

4. Share "Characteristics of Drop-outs" to support importance of child's affective education, peer acceptance, appropriate age-grade placement.

TOOLS TO HAVE ON HAND

- Affidavit forms
- Quick assessment test (if beneficial/in Spanish)
- Records from Mexico
- Wilson Riles' statement about undocumented students
- "Characteristics of drop-outs" (N.Y.S.D.E.)
- Student and Program Needs Assessment (SAPNA)

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE FOR PARENT EDUCATION REGARDING UPGRADING

- Training during summer school for parents who will be enrolling children in the Fall.
- A form for parents to sign requesting upgrading of their children (this may be all you need)
- Training at parent meetings concerning the importance of proper placement.
- Migrant Staff informing parents of age-grade placement during the initial home visit interview.
- List of procedures on how to upgrade for parents.

TEACHER EDUCATION

Educating the teachers to the irrevocable damage done by improper age-grade placement, and by retention, can produce mystery advocates and fewer failures of migrant students by teachers. Teachers should be informed that it is illegal to retain a child because he is in NEP/LEP (on the basis of second language limitations.)

HOW TO CURE IMPROPER AGE-GRADE PLACEMENT

Possibilities to Explore:

I. Advancement during the Summer Break

Clients for upgrading may be identified in summer school and given extra tutoring and/or testing to justify upgrading; or they may be given material that the school thinks is essential to upgrading (i.e., fractions) - each school has it's pet subject that they believe to be essential to that grade level. In the Fall, the parent, Resource Teacher, and student can arrive at the school with (1) written parent request, (2) summer school teacher recommendations, (3) test scores, and (4) records of summer work.

II. Fait Accompli

Sometimes upgrading can occur during a natural break in the child's education; for instance, between elementary and junior high school. If the child is relatively new to the district, the child can be presented to a new school as a student for the more appropriate grade level, without going into detail on his previous grade level. In other words, if it is just assumed that this new student is going into the eight grade instead of the seventh, and his age is appropriate, there may be no reason to question it.

Also, a graduate of the fifth grade might be taken to the junior high the following Fall and presented as a seventh grader with evidence of his age to support the placement.

Or, Junior High School may be eliminated altogether. All of the subjects taught will be offered again in high school, and some high school programs offer more alternatives to meet special needs, plus, students can begin earning credits for their work.

SPECIAL NEEDS AT THE JUNIOR HIGH LEVEL

There may be a slim possiblity of lobbying for special programs at the junior high level, based on the fact that even junior high staff will acknowledge that the age-grade problem is practically incurable at the high school.

Junior highs focus on content: English, History, Biology, at a time when migrant children seem to be especially in need of skills. Since junior high school credits are not needed for high school, this may be a time to propose intensive labs for basic skills and ESL for migrant and other students needing the skills to survive in high school. At the risk of offending the schools it can be pointed out that history, english and biology will be taught again in high school, but that many high schools are not organized for reaching the child in need of remediation or language development.

Therefore it might be proposed that a migrant child who is over-age plan to spend only one year in a two year junior high program, focusing primarily on basic skill courses rather than being required to complete all the junior high course requirements.

BRAINSTORMING UPGRADING AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

- Educate all appropriate school personnel to the horrors of improper age-grade placement so that they can asssist in seeking solutions.
- Identify sutdents who are improperly placed to counselors, and express concern about seeking solutions. (Often counselors will advocate for those students to receive credit wherever possible)
- Make sure student has received all possible credits for schooling in Mexico or elsewhere. Provide a model letter in Spanish to send to schools in Mexico.
- Explore possibility of students' challenging classes for credit (i.e., Spanish classes
- Argue logic that if English speaking children are getting credit for learning Spanish a Spanish speaking child should get credit for learning English (ESL- if they are

not presently getting credit for this).

- Explore challenging classes by taking tests in Spanish (i.e., Math classes).
- Promote use of PASS for extra credits where appropriate.
  - Supplementary during school year (at home).
  - Supplementary during school year (at school during study hours).
  - Offer special intensive weekend or vacation study sessions using PASS material and completing units in one subject area.
- Work with school administrators to develop plan for these recurring situations including testing procedures; identification of NEP/LEP students; form letter to Mexico for credits; possibility of Spanish language credits; challenging classes; credit for work study; school policy on PASS.....

POSSIBILITIES FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ABANDONED ALL HOPE

- Send the student directly to junior college (if available).
- Enroll student in adult education classes / G.E.D. in Spanish.
- Explore possibility of sending student to H.E.P. site (high school equivalency program, live-in approximately six months, depending on progress in Oregon, Stockton and Fresno).
- Seek out vocational education programs, or companies that provide training and employment services.
- VISTA, Job-Corps, PEACE CORPS,.... or the military service???
- Keep the drop-out enrolled in the migrant Education Program, and keep in touch!

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

ASSESSMENT OF NEED - To determine need for the implementation of project upgrade a list of students with age and grade level can be compiled from the school records, or the MSRTS. The student and program needs assessment form can be used to facilitate this process, and if completed will also provide support data such as CTBS SCORES and NEP/LEP status.

EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF PROJECT UPGRADE

SHORT-TERM: List of migrant students' placement (from school records or MSRTS, local or Little Rock) before Upgrade and after Upgrade can be compared.
Make a scatter graph, to illustrate age/grade distribution. (Sept-Oct and June)

LONG-TERM EVALUATION

Graduation data: Assemble:

1st year: number of migrant students enrolled in program
number of 12 graders (October)
number of 3rd graders (for comparison)
number of graduates
percentage of graduates/total migrants
percentage of graduates/seniors
age of 12th graders
age of graduates

Assemble and compare the above statistics annually.

PROYECTO PARA AVANZAR

RAZON DEL PROYECTO

¿Cuál es el resultado de poner a un niño migratorio en un grado mas bajo del cual le corresponde de acuerdo a su edad?

Frecuentemente el niño no se gradúa. Debido a que en la mayoría de los sistemas de las escuelas el avanzar al niño a un nivel mas alto, raramente ocurre, un niño puesto en un grado inapropiado es por ende condenado a graduarse con retraso de por lo menos tantos años como el niño fue mal puesto. O bien, el niño no se va a graduar del todo. En adición a la mala asignación de grados está el hecho que la continua migración del niño le puede causar perder mas años en la escuela, o en el nivel de la escuela secundaria le puede causar una pérdida de créditos. El segundo factor mas común para la tardanza de la graduación es la necesidad que tiene la familia del niño, para que éste trabaje o ayude a cuidar a sus hermanos para permitirles a los padres trabajar durante el tiempo de pizca. Esto frecuentemente hace que los niños pierdan mas créditos e inclusive algunos años para graduarse.

Descripción del Problema:

En las estadísticas podemos ver que muy pocos niños migratorios se gradúan a la edad de 20 años y casi ninguno se ha graduado después de los 20. Esto indica que cualquier niño que es puesto dos o mas años debajo de su grado correspondiente es automáticamente uno que va a retirarse de la escuela . Aun cuando solo están retrasados por un año y están con la posibilidad de perder uno más debido a que han estado migrando o porque han perdido créditos en los años mas altos encamina a los niños a retirarse de la escuela.

¿PORQUE NO LOS PONEN EN EL GRADO CORRECTO?

1. Se miran muy pequeños.
2. No hablan inglés asi que no protestan.
3. Las escuelas piensan que ellos van a aprender inglés mas rápido en grados menores.
4. Los estudiantes, algunas veces, han asistido a la escuelas muy poquito o nada.
5. Los padres de los estudiantes le informan a la escuela del último grado al cual los niños asistieron (el cual puede que no sea el equivalente, o puede que refleje un año de estar viajando, o que asistió a la escuela muy poquito).
6. Las escuelas ponen a los niños migratorios con otros niños migratorios o con los niños NEP/LEP*.
7. Algunos creen que si los niños asisten al kindergarten solo tienen que ir medio dia, y eso sería mas facil para el niño.

* NEP/LEP: Que no habla inglés/ingles limitado.

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HECHOS ACERCA DE LA COLOCACION DE LOS ESTUDIANTES MIGRATORIOS

1. La mala colocación de los niños migratorios es muchas veces algo que no se puede remediar una vez hecho, pero se debe evitar a toda costa.
2. Una vez que el niño está en la escuela secundaria, avanzar es casi imposible debido al sistema de créditos.
3. Una vez que el niño es puesto en un grado, es muy difícil hacer que avanze o suba de grado porque las escuelas no quieren establecer un precedente para otros.
4. En esencia no hay regulaciones para poner a los alumnos en cierto grado; es posible que las escuelas tengan regulaciones, pero es muy raro que las tengan.
5. La oficina de administración es la primera que hace decisiones acerca de la colocación de los niños migratorios.
6. Los ayudantes migratorios son regularmente los segundos en hacer la decisión de la colocación de los niños migratorios.
7. Es posible que sin saberlo, los padres pidan que sus hijos sean colocados en el grado que no les corresponde por una variedad de razones.

AYUDA PARA PROMOVER LA COLOCACION CORRECTA DE LOS NIÑOS MIGRATORIOS CUANDO ENTRAN A LA ESCUELA POR PRIMERA VEZ

- Educar al padre antes de que el niño entre a la escuela para que sepa las ventajas que tiene el poner al niño en el grado que le corresponde.
- Si los padres no tienen el certificado de nacimiento, hay que informarles que ellos pueden firmar una declaración jurada estableciendo la fecha de nacimiento del niño (no necesitan papeles de inmigración y la escuela no puede pedirlos acorde a la ley).
- Educar a los asistentes sobre la importancia de poner al niño en el grado correcto (a base de sesiones, periódicos o bien por enseñanza individual).
- Investigar en la escuela quien hace las decisiones de la colocación de los niños y luego educar a esta persona o bien hablar con el Director y pedirle que una persona en particular sea asignada para hacer estas decisiones (preferiblemente una maestra bilingue) y que eduquen a esta persona.
- Indicarles al Director y al Superintendente la importancia que tiene el poner a los niños en el grado indicado.
- Identificar, ofrecer entrenar y administrar un rápido questionario o prueba (en el lenguaje mas fuerte del niño) para determinar el nivel de grado. (Esto puede que sea una desventaja si los niños tienden a tener un bajo nivel academico;se puede usar esto como una última alternativa).

PROCEDIMIENTO SUGERIDO PARA LA EDUCACION ACERCA DEL AVANCE

- Entrenamiento durante el verano para los padres quienes van a inscribir a sus hijos en el otoño.
- Una forma para que los padres firmen una petición de avance para sus hijos (esto puede que sea todo lo que necesite)
- Entrenamiento en las sesiones de padres acerca de la importancia de la colocación correcta de los niños.
- La administración migratoria le informará a los padres de la colocación del niño acorde a su grado durante la primera visita al hogar.
- Lista para los padres de procedimientos para avanzar.

COMO CURAR LA INCORRECTA COLOCACION EN EL GRADO-EDAD

Posibilidades para explorar:

I. Avance durante las vacaciones del verano.

Los niños que necesiten avanzar deben ser identificados durante la escuela del verano y se les debe dar especial instrucción y/o pruebas para justificar el avanze o bien se les debe dar material que la escuela piense que sea esencial para avanzar al niño, cada escuela tiene sus reglas, las cuales creen que son esenciales para determinado grado. En el otoño, el padre, la maestra de recursos y el estudiante pueden llegar a la escuela con (1) la petición escrita del padre, (2) las recomendaciones de la maestra de la escuela del verano, (3) los resultados de la prueba, y (4) los registros del trabajo efectuado durante el verano.

POSIBILIDADES PARA AQUELLOS QUE HAYAN ABANDONADO TODA ESPERANZA

- Enviar al estudiante directamente a los primeros años de un colegio universitario (si hay uno disponible).
- Inscribir al estudiante en clases para educación para adultos/G.E.D.* en español
- Explorar la posibilidad de enviar al estudiante a un campo de H.E.P.*
- Buscar programas de educación vocacional, o compañías que proveen entrenamiento y servicios para emplear gente.
- VISTA, Corporaciones para trabajo, Corporaciones de paz...o el servicio militar???
- Mantengan a los niños inscritos en el Programa de Educación Migrante y mantenganse en contacto!

* G.E.D: General Education Diploma, una prueba que es equivalente a probar si saben lo suficiente para recibir el diploma de la educación secundaria.

* H.E.P.: High School Equivalency Program, vivir en el campo de la escuela por aproximadamente seis meses, dependiendo del progreso en Oregon, en Stockton o Fresno.

CONSEJOS PARA LOS PADRES DE COMO ASEGURARSE QUE SU HIJO SEA BIEN COLOCADO

1. Provea la información correcta de la fecha de nacimiento de su hijo.

   A. Certificado de nacimiento.
   B. Certificado de bautismo.
   C. Declaración jurada (affidavit).

   Nota: Asegúrese que la escuela sepa cual es la fecha de nacimiento y cual es la fecha del certificado.

2. Averigue cual es el grado correcto para la edad de su hijo en las escuelas de los Estado Unidos.

   Correcta colocación acorde al grado y edad:

Grado	Edad	Grado	Edad
K	5-6	7º	12-13
1º	6-7	8º	13-14
2º	7-8	9º	14-15
3º	8-9	10º	15-16
4º	9-10	11º	16-17
5º	10-11	12º	17-18
6º	11-12		

3. Proveer cualquier documento que venga de la escuela anterior a la cual el niño asistió, los cuales van a apoyar la correcta colocación del niño.

4. Averiguar las razones y justificaciones para la correcta colocación del niño.

   a. Lo primero es pedir que el niño sea colocado en el grado apropiado y luego si no esta cumpliendo y no se adapta, se le puede examinar para un programa especial.

   b. Explique a las autoridades de la escuela que los niños migratorios raramente se gradúan cuando pasan de la edad de 20 años de acuerdo a las estadísticas.

   c. Señale el impacto negativo que tiene la mala colocación del niño con sus hermanos.

   d. Haga énfasis en que su hijo se desarrolla mejor en su primer lenguaje (si este es el caso), por lo que aprende mas rápidamente en su idioma natal.

   e. El mayor tiempo que pase en la escuela significa que va a tener mas contacto con el inglés, por esta razón medio día de clases en el Kindergarten es menos productivo que un día completo en el primer grado.

   f. Un niño puede ser colocado en el grado apropiado y se le puede permitir que visite un grado menor para la instrucción del idioma inglés.

5. Ultimos recursos

   a. La escuela no puede retener al niño por la única razon que el es un niño NEP/LEP* sin un plan individual de aprendizaje ni la aprobación de los padres*.

   b. Haga una petición por escrito para que el niño sea colocado apropiadamente.

   c. Pida que le dejen ver la póliza de la escuela concerniendo la colocación del niño.

   d. Pida que le dejen ver el CTBS (Test de California para los Conocimientos básicos) o bien cualquier otra nota que indique el grado de habilidad del estudiante en la clase en la cual su niño debería estar (un grupo de la misma edad).

*No habla inglés/ingles limitado.
*Código de educación, Sección 52163.